

LEARNING TO STUDY THE BIBLE OBSERVATION

Inductive definition: Going from specific details to a general principal (*Puzzle: gather all the pieces and assemble them to see the big picture*)

DON'T MAKE THESE MISTAKES!

1. **SCRIPTURE HUNTING** (aka "Cherry-Picking"): starting with a preconceived idea and finding verses to back it up without ever considering the context those verses are in. Don't start with a conclusion. Gather all the data and let the data form a picture for you. This is inductive study.
2. **SELF-CENTERED** ("What does this mean to ME?") When people ask this they make themselves the authority of what Scripture means, rather than Scripture. *Who cares about people's opinions - we want to know what God meant!* Inductive Bible Study keeps Scripture as the authority. Our goal is understanding what the *author* meant when he spoke. Our question at that point should always be, "What did the author mean when he wrote this?"
3. **SPIRITUALIZING** Looking for hidden meanings that are not stated in the text. Importing or imposing meaning onto the text that is not there. God communicated with us in language we can understand. Our goal is understanding His meaning. To impose my own meaning on God's Word is irresponsible and dangerous.
4. **SPRINGBOARDING** Starting with Scripture, and not sticking with it so that trendy teachings, personal agendas, hobby horses, psychology and so on can be taught instead of Scripture.

THE 3.5 STEPS OF INDUCTIVE STUDY:

0.5) PRAYER

- 1) OBSERVE
- 2) INTERPRET
- 3) APPLY

Step 0.5 - PRAYER

the following 4 things increase:

1. our _____ knowledge _____ of God
2. our _____ love _____ for God
3. Christ is _____ centered _____ in our lives
4. our _____ doing _____ what we told to do
5. Our looking _____ forward _____ to the future

STEP #1: OBSERVATION:

" _____ What does it SAY _____ ?"

(Do NOT try answering "What does it MEAN?" in this step. Stay focused on what the author actually says)

-Details, Details, Details: asking the 5W's and H questions, investigate the passage, interrogate the passage, reading, re-reading and re-re-reading the text, SLOW DOWN, picking out the facts in the text and writing them down or marking them, repeat process....

OBSERVATION QUESTIONS

(to help see “*what it says*”)

Who is the author or speaker? (Paul, Peter, 1,2,3 John, Hebrews, Gospels)

Who were the original recipients? (James 1:1; Luke 1:1-4; Titus 1:4; Philippians 1:1)

Why was this book written? Does the author state it in the book? (1 Timothy 3:14-15; John 20:31; Luke 1:1-4)

What is the literary form? (narrative –Gospels, Acts; parable; epistle – Colossians; prophetic - Revelation)

What is the overall message of the book? How does this passage fit into that message?

What precedes this passage? What follows? (Titus 1 focus on leadership qualifications precedes necessity of rebuking false teachers)

Are there any repeated words or phrases? (“Sleep”, “night”, “day” in 1 Thessalonians 5:4-10; “dwelling/tent” in 2 Corinthians 5:1-6; “love” in 1 John 4:7-21)

What verbs are used to describe action? Hebrews 10:22-25 “let us” repeated 4 times

Does the author ask any questions? Does he answer them? (Romans 3:1, 3, 5-9, 27, 29, 31)

Any words indicating time? Beginning, first, last, then, etc (Hebrews 1:1-4, Revelation)

Does the author use any figures of speech, similes, allegories, or metaphors? (Galatians 4:24; Revelation 1:20; Ezekiel 36:17; Isaiah 5:1-8)

Are there any comparisons or contrasts? (law/faith in Galatians 2:15-16, worldly vs spiritual 1 Cor. 3:1-3, Spirit vs flesh in Gal 5:13-26)

Does the author point out any cause/effect relationships? (John 3:16, God’s love caused Him to give His Son; Acts 8:1, persecution scatters the Christians out of Jerusalem)

Is there any progression or sequence to the passage? (Time, geography, action, theme)

- Time “then”, “before”, “after”, etc. see Revelation
- Geography: Acts 18:18-23;
- Action: Mark’s Gospel has lots of action, least amount of dialogue of Gospels
- Theme: John 4:1-42 from physical water to spiritual water; from the well to Jesus; from quenching thirst to salvation

Is there a key/pivotal statement or word? (John 4:16-17, transitions from her need for water to her sin)